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U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PERMANENT SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515

February 1, 1978

THOMAS K. LATIMER, STAFF DIRECTOR

MICHAEL J. O'NEIL, CHIEF COUNSEL

Honorable Stansfield Turner
Director of Central Intelligence
Washington, D. C. 20505

Dear Admiral Turner:

In the course of this Committee's short existence, both Members and staff have encountered reluctance and confusion in response to their requests for access to compartmented intelligence programs. One reason which has been suggested for the guarded answers that result is that there are numerous compartmented programs and access lists. The "need to know" principle seems to have been applied so thoroughly that intelligence community officials are reluctant to even acknowledge the existence of compartmented systems, much less make the product of such systems available to all the consumers who might wish to use it. Examples of such restricted programs are special reconnaissance activities, CIA human source reports and special SIGINT systems.

This Committee recognizes the very real necessity for special protection of the sources of certain kinds of information. It agrees that the "need to know" principle is still the best rule to follow in protecting classified information from unauthorized disclosure. At the same time, a concern which this Committee also shares is that specially compartmented intelligence product may be so well guarded that the necessarily constant flow of high grade information required by intelligence analysts is being interdicted. A necessary corollary to this is that if an analyst isn't aware of a particular kind of product, he will not request it and probably never miss it. This works against the need to supply top policy makers, military commanders and other key consumers of intelligence with a diversity of high quality intelligence assessments.

It has further come to the attention of the Committee that there is no individual or entity in the intelligence community which has control over all the compartmented

access systems in the intelligence community. This is confirmed by the CIA's Director of Security. It has prompted the Committee to look at these systems, all of which you, as Director of Central Intelligence, may not be completely cognizant.

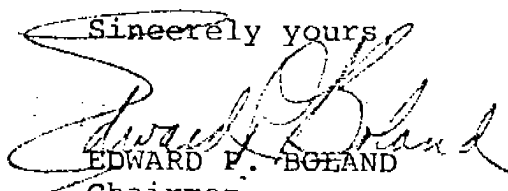
The Committee wishes to acquire a comprehensive listing of all the compartmented systems - including special access lists and non-NFIP systems - of the nation's intelligence activities. The Committee will then explore the possibility of reducing compartmentation both in light of the need for better analysis and the need for security.

I am therefore requesting that you conduct a survey of all the compartmented systems and access lists in our intelligence activities of which you are aware or for which you have cognizance. I further request that you prepare a report detailing your findings and submit that report to this Committee by April 1, 1978. This report, in addition to listing and describing all the information described above, should also indicate how many persons are cleared for access to each system or program, what it costs to maintain security for these systems or programs, whether they are cost effective in terms of the protection which special security provides and in terms of the value to intelligence analysis which their product helps provide. In light of the intelligence charter legislation which the Committee is currently considering, the Committee would also be particularly interested in any recommendations you might have as to the desirability of a centralized structure of compartmented accesses. The study should also specify your authority for creating compartmented systems and the authority under which any other official creates such compartmented systems.

As so often happens in the intelligence business, terms of art spring up which are often misunderstood or never recognized by those new to intelligence. This is also true of new intelligence oversight committees. The intent of this letter is to request of you as thorough and comprehensive a report as it is possible for you to assemble. If I have not used some term of reference or description which is relevant to this request, I trust you will understand the meaning I am trying to convey in this letter.

Looking forward to hearing your report, I am, with every good wish,

Sincerely yours,


EDWARD P. BOLAND
Chairman